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(The excavations at Tell es-Sultān are again in progress. Miss Kenyon arrived at the School the last day of the year. Within three or four days digging was already going on. In the absence of a field archaeologist at the School, we are not co-operating with the excavations, but two of our men, Professor Boone M. Bowen of Emory University and Ivan Kaufman, have made independent arrangements with Miss Kenyon to spend some time in observation and work under her direction. Each has been assigned a section of the mound for supervision.

The present newsletter is devoted to reports from two of our other students. Mr. Oleg Grabar is the School Fellow. He received his secondary education in France where his major emphasis centered on the humanities (Greek and Latin). He received the certificat de licence at the University of Paris in history; later he was graduated from Harvard University (magna cum laude) where he began his Arabic studies. During the past two years he has continued his work in Arabic at Princeton. He has a special interest in Islamic art, and his preparation has thus equipped him admirably for the studies he is now pursuing in Jerusalem. James Ross, now with us here as a student, received his degree from Union Theological Seminary with honors. He served as tutor assistant in the department of Old Testament there and is working toward his Th.D. degree. These two reports are somewhat different from the previous newsletters, but they give a first-hand account of how these men are spending their year at the School.)

J.M.

The major part of my activity at the American School of Oriental Research this year has been devoted to two studies in Umayyad art; first, the preparation, for publication, of the paintings found in the ruined palace of Khirbet el-Mafjar; and second; an investigation into the imperial ceremonial and art of the Umayyad caliphs.

The large complex of buildings called Khirbet el-Mafjar lies about a mile north of Tell es-Sultān, the site where Miss Kenyon is at present pursuing her work on Jericho. The buildings were excavated in several seasons between 1934 and 1948 by D.C. Baramki and R.W. Hamilton. They comprise a palace proper preceded by a forecourt and pool, a mosque, and a bath, the latter of a type hitherto unknown in early Islamic art. Two inscriptions date the palace in the time of Hishām (724-743 A.D.), but they do not—contrary to what has often been assumed—necessarily imply that the palace was built for Hishām. The bath was the only completed part of the whole complex. The palace proper was never finished and was abandoned probably after the earthquake of 747. Its construction, however, was fairly well advanced.

Aside from a great wealth of mosaics and carved stucco and stones, the palace yielded over 250 painted fragments. These do not include the numerous statues or sculptured decorative friezes which may also have been painted. They are all frescoes. Many of the fragments have by now disappeared, either destroyed in order to permit further digging or broken during transportation from Jericho to Jerusalem, where almost all of the remaining ones are now. These fragments are comparatively small, rarely exceeding 30cm. in either direction. With few exceptions they decorated two parts of the palace: the second floor of the eastern part of the palace proper, and the baths.

R.W. Hamilton, the former Director of Antiquities in Palestine, is preparing a final publication of the site and with his kind permission I am preparing for this work a report upon the paintings.

The task of studying these paintings presents two problems. First it is necessary to describe them and either to reconstruct the decorative scheme of which they formed a part or, in the case of figurative representations, to explain the scene, if any, to which these figures belonged. Second, it is necessary to compare the Khirbet el-Mafjar fragments stylistically and iconographically with contemporary or older monuments.

The first task is by now more or less completed. Most of the fragments are parts of decorative motives which adorned the walls and the ceilings of the palace. All the fragments from the baths attempt to imitate architectural devices: capitals, columns, niches with shells etc. Most prominent among these fragments are those which copy marble motives, attempting to give the impression that the walls were covered with rich stones. In the palace proper, next to purely decorative motives such as acanthus, rosettes, flowers, volutes, and friezes of all natures, there are a number of representations of human figures and perhaps of historical scenes. Thus the repertoire of early Islamic figurative representations is greatly increased and new conclusions may be drawn on the type of iconography used by the Umayyads. It is, however, unfortunately true that many pieces are so fragmentary—showing a head, bust, or a leg—that it will probably not be possible to do more than suggest hypotheses. One generalization about these fragments that can be safely advanced is that the themes and motives of these paintings are not exclusively pictorial: that is, they do not belong exclusively to painting as a technique. On the contrary, quite often the same or similar motives are found as well in mosaics, stuccoes, sculptures, and textiles. In other words, the decorative idea takes precedence over the technique in which the motive is to be executed.

The second problem, that of the origin of the themes, is a more complex one. Many motives belong to a straightforward Roman-Hellenistic tradition. But quite a few can be more readily derived from Sassanian art,

I have been able to show that the decoration of a rather large section in the northern part of the eastern half of the palace was directly derived from Sassanian textile motives. This conclusion may lead to interesting hypotheses as to the means by which the Umayyad art of Syria and Palestine acquired its synthetic quality, combining eastern motives with the tradition of a Hellenistic Syria. Another point of interest is that, in the process of adapting Roman decorative motives to their own taste, the Umayyads reached results rather similar to those reached by Romanesque art three centuries later in Western Europe. No physical relationship between the two can be established. What we are dealing with is rather an identity of psychological attitudes in the two civilizations—Umayyad and Romanesque—toward the artistic wealth of the lands they conquered.

At present I am dealing with the border motives of Khirbet el-Mafjar; and therefore I spend most of my time in the three main libraries of Jerusalem, that of the ASOR, of the École Biblique, and especially of the Palestine Museum, looking for comparisons and derivations.

My doctoral dissertation, which deals with the ceremonial and art of the Umayyad caliphs, is to a large extent connected with the problems posed by the site of Khirbet el-Mafjar. It proposes to do two things. First, from a methodological point of view, it is an attempt to connect more systematically than has been done Umayyad texts with the monuments left by the dynasty. With the two palaces of Qasr al-Hayr in Syria and a dozen others in Jordan—the best known of which are Qasr 'Amra, Mshatta, and Khirbet el-Mafjar—we have not only an extensive group of

Umayyad buildings but also a great wealth of iconographical details, which no one has ever attempted to study as a body. But to be successful a study of this group of monuments should not consider them in a historical vacuum, but attempt to correlate them with the textual documents we have about the Umayyad period. My work in this direction has suggested a re-evaluation of some texts hitherto considered untrustworthy--such as many passages from the Kitāb al-Agharī--and has pointed to a totally new interpretation for many artistic themes, such as, for instance, the painting of the six kings at Qusayr 'Zmra. A short note on the latter subject is to appear in the near future in Ars Orientalis.

Thus I was led to the second point of my thesis, an attempt to reinterpret the meaning of Umayyad palaces. So far they have been considered as an expression of the Beduin's love for the desert and hate for cities. They were taken to be hideouts where the caliphs went to enjoy themselves, drink, and listen to music and poetry. But a close analysis of both texts and monuments shows rather conclusively that the Umayyads were far from being pure and simple Beduins. At the head of the greatest agglomeration of lands ever united until their time, in contact with Byzantium, the most refined civilization of the Middle Ages and the direct heir of the Roman-Hellenistic tradition, and having conquered Persia, the second most illustrious civilization of the early Middle Ages, the Umayyad caliphs took over an imperial way of life similar to that of the shahinshahs and of the basileis. This can be shown in political theory, in court ceremonial, and in art. Why, then, did the Umayyads go into the desert to live in an imperial way? It must be said first that the desert palaces are the only ones left and that some sources suggest that the Umayyad palaces in Damascus were rather luxurious affairs. But there may be another reason, and that is that the Umayyad caliphs--or the ruling class--went too fast and too far. The Muslim Arab population which supported them was still too Beduin and too near the early Islamic way of life to accept a change in the life of its leaders. What became customary under the 'Abbasids was not yet palatable to the early Muslims.

It can be seen that many problems arise incidentally in a study of this nature. The first part of the thesis, dealing with the ceremonial of the Umayyad court, was based primarily on written sources. It is finished and has been sent to Princeton. The second part deals more specifically with the architecture and the iconography of the palaces. During our field trip to Syria early this year I was able to spend some time at the Damascus museum examining the various fragments from Qasr al-Hayr that have been assembled there. At present, in close connection with my work on the paintings of Khirbet el-Mafjar, I am trying to imagine and to explain the scheme of decoration of that palace. Later I am going to deal with the other palaces, particularly Qasr Kharānah, Qusayr 'Amra, and Khirbet el-Minyah. It is all too often that one forgets that together with ancient, Roman, and Byzantine monuments, the Jordan-Palestine area contains some of the oldest Islamic monuments in existence. The Dome of the Rock is known to all visitors to Jerusalem, Khirbet el-Mafjar and Mshatta to some. But only a few know of the existence in the desert east of 'Amman of a dozen Umayyad palaces and baths, one of which is decorated with paintings. In order to complete the archaeological data necessary for my thesis, I hope to be able to arrange a trip through the Jordanian desert and visit these and other remnants of the civilization that left us the Dome of the Rock, no doubt the most impressive monument of Jerusalem today, and the mosaics of Khirbet el-Mafjar, whose themes are now repeated and spoiled by modern potters in Palestine.

This outline of my work explains why the Umayyads have acquired at the School a somewhat proverbial quality--not always, I am afraid, to their advantage. But, while early Islamic civilization forms the core of my work here this year, I also spend some time working on Arabic, more on classical Arabic and less on colloquial than I had wished. I am also starting on a project to rediscover the topography of Jerusalem in the XIIIth century, after the city had been reoccupied by Saladin.

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The task is not by any means one that I propose to complete this year, but it will provide good opportunities to walk through the back streets of the city when the weather gets warm.

Just after Christmas my wife and I took a trip to Cairo, where we collected a great many photographs of Mameluk and Fātimid buildings. At Easter (or rather before ~~and~~ or after Easter, for we do not want to miss the religious celebrations of the Holy Land) we are planning to go to Damascus and Aleppo and collect notes and photographs of the Aiyūbid monuments still in existence.

This roundup of Islamic activities at the School would be incomplete if I did not mention that I also have yielded to the pressure of social habits at the School and acquired an Arab lamp with an inscription. Now I find myself working on early inscriptions on lamps and on the very curious carving on some of them. The subject, although small, is not uninteresting, for it introduces us into the world of the little man, as opposed to the world of kings and princes, which is the only one represented in chronicles and monuments.

Oleg Grabar, Fellow.

The readers of the Newsletter are aware that the major project of the Jerusalem School during the current year is work on the Qumran scrolls. Dr. Frank M. Cross, in Newsletter #1, 1953-54, has described the materials from the Fourth Cave, and further notices have appeared from time to time. My work, however, has been confined to the scroll of Isaiah discovered in 1947 (DS1a), and has taken the form of a comparison of DS1a with the Massoretic text and the ancient versions. The goal, of course, as in all of our work, is the re-establishment of the Hebrew text and the ascertaining of the history of the transmission of that text. Accordingly "trial soundings" (to use the archaeological term) have been taken in various portions of the text corresponding to divisions made by higher criticism--1-33, 34-35, 36-39, 40-55, and 56-66--in order to determine the areas of maximum agreement and disagreement. Both orthographical and material differences between MT and DS1a are noted--a statistical survey of the former may possibly indicate different "levels" in the transmission of the text, although the evidence is, so far, inconclusive. Special attention is paid to the spelling of proper names (in both the Hebrew and Greek texts) for the same reason. Transliterations in both the Septuagint and the younger translations may prove to be particularly interesting.

From one point of view the results thus far are rather negative. It would seem, indeed, that in a majority of cases there is no relationship whatever between LXX and DS1a. When DS1a diverges from MT, LXX for the most part follow MT either literally or paraphrastically, or go their own way, thus witnessing to a Vorlage differing from both MT and DS1a. Conversely, when LXX differ from MT, DS1a usually equals MT, aside from orthographical differences. The foregoing applies to what one might call "significant" differences; there are numerous cases where DS1a and LXX agree against MT in adding or dropping the article or the copula, in inserting kōl ʾal for ʾel (and vice versa), etc. These, however, may prove interesting when arranged in a statistical table. But the results are negative from only one point of view; seen from another angle, they may help us to determine the relative dates at which the texts of both the Hebrew and Greek Bibles were fixed in substantially their present forms. It would seem at this point as if there were less evidence for a multiplicity of recensions of both texts than is presumed by Kohle and his followers--but this applies only to Isaiah. And the publication of the Isaiah fragments found recently at Qumran may throw some additional light on the subject.

Those of the readers who have made a detailed study of the Gezer calendar may be interested to know that I had the rare opportunity of studying it first hand in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul this last Christmas. As may have been the case for some time, it is kept in a large case on the second story, with various other-

wise unidentified items from Gezer, and this floor is closed to the general public. The Siloam inscription is also upstairs. The director was quite kind in granting me permission to study both inscriptions, however, and provided me with a guard who stalked up and down the whole morning muttering (no doubt) about the crazy Americans who would spend so much time on a little piece of stone.

Having worked previously only from photographs of the Calendar, I was a bit surprised to find that, generally speaking, it is fairly easy to distinguish between the inscription itself and scratches and /or remnants of previous inscription (s). The latter are shallower and more worn. There are exceptions, however: only the hook of the pe in line 1 is deeply inscribed, the major part of the shaft being quite shallow. Furthermore the lamedh of loš in line 3 is quite shallow. Thus it is difficult to assess the complex in line 5 which has been variously identified as kaph and gimel. The right-hand oblique stroke on the bottom is shallow, but almost the same depth as the above-mentioned shaft of pe: the left-hand stroke is deeper, however. This is not apparent in Lidzbarski's photograph, in Ephemeris III, Tafel VI. Furthermore the two strokes seem to be continuations of the oblique strokes of the supposed kaph. Do we have here mere accidental gouges? Certainly this would seem to be the case in the goph's of line 5 and 6, which have a common vertical bar.

The holes in the bottom of the tablet and in the reverse toward the bottom are interesting; the former is mitred so that it forms a point where the small hole in the reverse is found. This would seem to support the conjecture that the tablet was once set up on a hook of some sort. That it was more than a chance scribble can be seen from the fact that it was squared off, and the left-hand was cross-hatched. Nothing can be made of the scratches on the reverse. There are faint traces of scratches running from the upper left to the lower right, which may represent erasure of a previous inscription.

James F. Ross.